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TRAINING AND RESEARCH: UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report has been prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 51/188 of 16 December 1996 on the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), in which the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to explore in consultation with the Executive Director of the Institute, as well as with the heads of United Nations programmes and funds, ways and modalities of cooperation, in order to better define the role of the Institute in the fields of training, research and methodology, assessment and capacity-building within the United Nations system, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

2. It will be recalled that in his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950, paras. 263-271, the Secretary-General, in dealing with measures regarding the United Nations University, research institutes and related bodies, stressed that United Nations institutes whose primary preoccupation is capacity-building, through training and different types of technical assistance, must increase contacts with one another, as well as with the United Nations Secretariat. This would avoid overlapping and duplication, and increase opportunities to exploit complementary aspects of their work.

3. In recent years, the Board of Trustees of UNITAR has given increasing attention to enhancing the Institutes's inter-agency cooperative links. During the thirty-fifth session of the Board, held at Geneva from 24 to 26 March 1997, the Trustees made a number of recommendations in this respect. They considered that the catalysing role of the Institute, its networking capacity and its ability to mobilize larger institutions around specific themes should be better explained to Member States and potential donors. They requested that an additional effort be made to encourage regional and intergovernmental

institutions to better comprehend and ultimately join existing UNITAR programmes. They also requested the Executive Director to provide them with a document exposing the principal axes of cooperation of UNITAR which would be regularly updated.

4. The Board reviewed the document during its session of September 1997 and noted that, though it was not exhaustive, it had considerable informative value for UNITAR's partners. The Board decided that Member States should be able to access the document on the UNITAR Web Site (http://www.unitar.org).

5. It appears from that document that the development of partnerships within and outside the United Nations system has been one of the main features of UNITAR strategy during the Institute's restructuring phase, which has just been completed. UNITAR has established and maintains a network of cooperation with departments of the United Nations Secretariat and the funds and programmes, and with most specialized agencies of the United Nations system. Those cooperative links are diverse in nature, ranging from occasional events to well structured, long-term joint ventures. With regard to cooperation with regional and national, public and non-governmental institutes, notably research institutions (see, inter alia, General Assembly resolution 50/121 of 20 December 1995), UNITAR has greatly expanded its network over the last few years, which has resulted in considerable progress in the development of relevant programmes. Cost-effectiveness is achieved also, since training and capacity-building ventures take place in situ, at country or regional level.

6. Within the United Nations system, many of the UNITAR training and capacity-building programmes represent joint ventures, both at the level of Headquarters and in the field. For example, the training programme to support the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is a bilaterally funded programme of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), implemented by UNITAR, in cooperation with the Convention secretariat and the Information Unit for Conventions of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In the field of training and capacity-building for chemicals management, UNITAR developed and is implementing a programme in close cooperation with States Members of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, on the one hand, and with a consortium of international bodies that are members of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), formed by the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, UNEP and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Other examples are given in detail in the report of the Acting Executive Director of UNITAR to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session (A/51/14 (Parts I and II)). Further cooperation in the development and implementation of programmes, in particular in Africa, will benefit from an in-depth study of training needs and means made by UNITAR in cooperation with the United Nations resident coordinators or UNDP resident representatives.

7. The experience of UNITAR in terms of training methodologies and pedagogical materials will undoubtedly be of value to the United Nations Staff College project, which was officially inaugurated by the Secretary-General in April 1997. As the Staff College is conceived as a global network of

institutions, partnership arrangements are key to the development of the project. The Secretary-General stated in his report (A/51/950) that the Staff College will be requested, in preparing programmes for international civil servants throughout the United Nations system, to make full use of the research and capacity-building experience of the research institutes. In this regard, the Secretary-General has appointed the Executive Director of UNITAR as an ex officio member of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Staff College project. At the 1st meeting of the Board, emphasis was placed on the importance of the College collaborating closely with, and drawing on the experience and networks of, the research and training institutes of the system. Collaboration has already begun in certain areas and should develop in the coming months.

8. Further to the measures described in the preceding paragraphs, it should be emphasized that, as stated in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/950), additional measures for coordinating and rationalizing the respective activities of the United Nations research and training institutes need to be pursued, so that those bodies can maximize their contribution to the policies, programmes and priorities of the United Nations. In this spirit, the participation of UNITAR in the work of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs will contribute to enhanced coordination of activities in the future.

9. The Board of Trustees has taken stock of the completion of the restructuring of UNITAR (see A/52/367). The Secretary-General wishes to state his gratitude for the commitment and dedication of the Trustees. Despite the restructuring, the Institute remains vulnerable, owing to the fragility of its General Fund. It should be noted that UNITAR is the exceptional case of a United Nations body for which voluntary contributions from developing countries outweigh in number those of industrialized countries (see A/51/14 (Part II), annex IV.A). It is hoped that it will be possible in the near future to place UNITAR on a sound financial footing.